be fed with apples while you may

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by ifonlyiwaswittier

Summary

Already burdened with the knowledge of what's been and what's to come, Hannibal and Will share dessert in the space between betrayals.

Notes

From a tumblr ask challenge (send me a made-up fic title and I'll write something for it on the subway to work lol).

See the end of the work for more notes

If Hannibal is Cain, then he is also Abel, and Will is the rock he brings down upon himself. He thinks this as he plates dessert, stopping to watch the moonlight reflect off the fresh blanket of snow, a gift from a late spring snowstorm that seemingly caught the whole city of Baltimore by surprise, as if hadn't been forecasted for a week now. The entire infrastructure brought to its knees and yet, somehow, Will has made the drive from Quantico, nearly two hours long in these conditions, to share dinner with him. Tomorrow, all this will be gone. The forecast predicts warmer weather and then heavy rain, enough to turn this snow to slush and then wash it all away.

But for now there is snow and there is Will and Hannibal is inclined to enjoy them both while he can, as ill advised as that may be. Gluttony was his Original Sin after all, though he has never professed to believe it a sin at all. An indulgence, rather, a three course feast of *knowing, knowing, knowing*.

The appetizer: a simple plating of olives, for Will was Hannibal's first place of prayer. The entree to represent the lamb of God and his sacrifice, of course, but also to represent Cain's sacrifice that the Lord so cruelly overlooked. And now the dessert: apples and honey.

Eve had gorged herself on the apples of Eden until her stomach bulged with excess, until the seeds took root and swelled into a taut round curve. She stuffed herself with the knowing until she burst with it. Her body expelled the tough stems that dangled temptation from Eden’s branches, purged the acerbic seeds, in the form of Cain. And then Eve, body now innocent of knowledge’s filth, beget Abel, just the same as Hannibal beget his own downfall, just as Hannibal had carried within his belly that fragile part of himself that would take his last breath still carrying love for the one that destroyed him, love that not even a sacrifice could excise—

"Hannibal?" Will asks from the doorway. Their eyes meet in the window's reflection and Hannibal thinks of Eden's apple passing Will's lips, thinks of him choking on it, thinks of the children's book Mischa had so loved with the picture of a cartoon pig roast, mouth spread wide by an apple. *X*'s for eyes, plump, pink— and is that not the color that Will would flush if Hannibal cut into him, paring knife peeling back the flesh like the skin of an apple, and would the softest parts of him be that pink if Hannibal were to taste them—

"Were you able to find the matches?" Hannibal asks, turning back to the apple he's peeling.

Will frowns, bites his lip, shakes his head once, then again, harder. "I mean, yes. Yes, I found them but... where were you?"

"I was here, Will," Hannibal replies, "preparing dessert. Is there something else you require?"

A ridiculous question, of course. They both require so, so much.

Will sighs and, to Hannibal's great irritation, doesn't take the hint. Instead, he grabs a knife from the block (*finally*, Hannibal thinks. Here is a betrayal they can understand.) and picks up second apple from the counter. He begins to peel, taking off the apple's skin in one long red

ribbon. And Hannibal, for lack of any better ideas on how to proceed, continues his work too, and together they drop curls of apple skins into the kitchen sink.

Theologians have pondered for centuries what transpired in the field that day, but Hannibal knows exactly: Cain pours a glass of whiskey for his brother, which means he's also pouring a glass of whiskey for himself (because do you not become the betrayer when you are made to be the betrayed? A question for a priest, certainly, but Hannibal has always valued a more practical— or rather, practicable— worship). He drinks whiskey not because it is his preference, but because the rock in his fallow field likes it and because the drink— like the fields and the sheep before it, like the blood to come— is a sacrifice. It is a sacrifice not to a Lord who refuses them a feast, but to the weapon that will defy His bidding.

There is no mention of a rock in the Bible. Hannibal wasn't always Cain. He wasn't always Abel. It's been many years since he's understood himself as anything but the sharpened stone that slits the ram's throat. What a sick thing, the love that taints his blood. He would purge it if he could. He can never hate Will, but he can do something far, far worse.

But he digresses. What Hannibal means to say is that as much as scholars and Rabbis and priests and the mad sidewalk prophets have all expounded at length on the contents of the conversation that drove the brother's to the final act, Hannibal knows it went something like this:

"Will," Hannibal begins.

They are in the study now, and the dessert is gone, and they are left with only this: one betrayal behind them and another up ahead, two bodies entwined in the narrow grave between darknesses.

What an odd experience it has been, Hannibal thinks, to discover he's been starving for years.

He pauses, reconsiders, and begins again. "Why do you think Cain killed his only brother?"

Will smiles, sad and slow and sweet as drizzled honey. "Why does anybody kill anybody? Better question is what makes them so special."

What makes them so special is the rock that watched it all happen, bloodied in Hannibal's grip and all the more beautiful for it. Now all that remains is to cast aside the stone.

End Notes

Thanks for reading and commenting! You can find me on tumblr @babygirlgiles

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